

From the Editor

THE 2nd Infantry Division takes center stage in this month's issue, with stories from former **Soldiers** staffer MSG John Brenci and his public affairs staff at Camp Red Cloud, Korea. The division continues to stand ready to respond to aggression at literally a moment's notice.

Also in this issue are several stories from Heike Hasenauer that take a look at Berlin today. It's an understatement to say how much Berlin has changed since the Wall came down. **Soldiers** who travel there now see a thriving and exciting city just now re-taking its place among the great cities of the world.

I hope you enjoy reading about these and the myriad other places around the world where American soldiers serve the nation and the causes of peace and freedom. This is my last full issue as editor in chief of **Soldiers**, as I am departing for new challenges and opportunities. It has been my privilege and my distinct honor to help bring you useful and usable information about our Army. It is and will remain my greatest thrill to have the title of soldier and wear a shirt that says, "U.S. ARMY."

Ray McWhittaker

Deadbeat Dads

WHILE Heike Hasenauer's September article "Cracking Down On Deadbeat Dads" properly addresses a very important issue, I must complain about the title. It is not only Dads who fall in this category. The percentage of custodial fathers is small, as the article stated, but it is growing as courts award custody to fathers in increasing numbers.

I was a noncustodial parent who faithfully paid child support for 10 years, like the vast majority of parents in these situations who meet their obligations. Nothing ever gets said about them regardless of gender. It's the "Deadbeat Dads" that get the press. Let's hear something about the games ex-wives play. One particularly good one that I have personally experienced follows.

My ex-wife was well aware that while I was on active duty I received a COLA raise every January. Rather than enter into an agreement that would automatically increase child support, she preferred to issue a subpoena through the court that required my presence in North Carolina, regardless of where I might be stationed at the time. This happened for eight straight years—even after the court told her to stop it. She got particularly good at timing the subpoena so that it would be served on Feb. 14 every year—my wedding anniversary to my second wife. As you can imagine, this ruined several romantic plans. I suppose what I am asking for is a little balance to the story by saying what some of us better Dads (note I didn't say "good" Dads) have done to meet our obligations. That recognition would be nice.

LTC Hank Hanrahan (Ret.)
Fort A.P. Hill, Va.

Identity Thieves

I READ with interest the identity theft article in the September issue. One of the echoing watch phrases in all articles on this subject is "guard your social security number." This is good advice. However, as many of us know, this is next to impossible in the service. While the use of the SSN as a means of identification by the military will undoubtedly continue, there are things that can be done.

Military exchanges still require customers to place their SSNs on the fronts of personal checks. This places service members at further risk for identity theft and is unnecessary. Many civilian businesses run checks through automatic check scanners to "approve" even out-of-state checks. Why can't AAFES adopt these check scanners for use in its commercial outlets? Perhaps it will take another article in **Soldiers** about the theft of service-member identities.

MAJ Eric G. Wahlgren
Fort Wainwright, Alaska

I READ your September article "Beware the Identity Thieves" and couldn't help but notice that social security number protection is bulleted first on your list of safeguarding items. It's ironic that the commissary and exchange systems refuse to stop what I consider an illegal practice of requiring everyone to put their SSNs on checks.

The truth is that they are the only business that requires an SSN on a check—other businesses validate checks with driver's license numbers through Telecheck and similar companies. The commissary and PX have forced us to reduce our shopping to cash only, simply to avoid having to divulge our SSNs. I wonder why the Army continues to let AAFES and the commissary system get away with making soldiers violate the Social Security Number Privacy Act in a time when identity theft is at an all-time high.

MAJ Rodney F. Walden
via e-mail

WHEN I picked up the September issue of **Soldiers** and looked at the table of contents, I almost threw it away. I don't mean to come down on the magazine, but I am sick and tired of seeing references to just deadbeat "dads." I have been divorced for more than two years and have custody of my two children. My ex-wife is so far behind on child support that

it isn't even funny. Is anyone calling her a deadbeat mom? If I were as far behind as she is, I would be in jail.

While I know that laws differ from state to state, in Minnesota if you don't pay for three straight months they take your driver's license away. I didn't receive a payment from June to September, but nothing has happened yet. I don't blame the



